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SUGGESTIONS  
For Improving  
the Cure of  
CODFISH 



St. John's, Nfld.  
April 8th, 1903.

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This book is the gift of  
Dr. R. Gustave

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## TO THE FISHERMEN of Newfoundland.

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DEAR SIRs,--

It is an indisputable fact that the chief Industry of this Country is its **Codfishery**, and we should carefully guard against anything that would interfere with its success.

We find in some seasons good demand for our Codfish. and we then obtain good prices ; but such results are not obtained as they should be, **by the merit of our product** ; but depend entirely upon the conditions brought about in the various markets by our competitors, the French and Norwegians.

The principal drawback to a better command of markets and uniformly paying rates, arises from a lack of sufficient interest in the handling and cure of our Fish. **It is much more important to make good Fish**, than to secure a **big voyage**. Many persons, however, are quite content when they get **a lot of Fish** and trouble very little about how much of it they can make **Merchantable**.

In every harbour around our Country persons can **always have good fish**, and others who never have any **fish**.

Too often in the past, the maker of good fish has been and has seen his careless neighbour getting for inferior quality price as he was receiving for genuine Merchantable ; but this past season, and we warn you of a possibly greater difference between a first-class cure of Fish and the general run of which cullers find so hard to classify.

It is not necessary to tell you what makes **bad fish** contribute to it ; but with the exception of **continuous bad** can all be put into one word "**carelessness**."

The intention of this paper, however, is not to tell you what you already know, but to urge those who either do not know, or who have sent have been too careless, or what is even worse, working on the principle of "**everyone for himself**," and practicing various methods to get the same price as those who have the better article.

If the following directions for curing and handling of fish shall soon have a great improvement in the quality of our fish, we do not contain **all** that may be said upon the subject, but enough fully followed, to give Newfoundland Fish a preference in all markets.

## **DIRECTIONS.**

**SPLITTING.** As soon as possible after fish is caught, it should be split, carrying knife down and laying the knife close to the tail. Be careful in raising the knife not to **dip** the knife, (which at once makes the fish crooked) take out the bone as far down as possible so as to leave the fish straight. When this is not done the end of the sound-bone with the head spoils the appearance of the fish, and, if bad weather is met with, is liable to rot and breed maggots.

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**SALTING.** All blood or scraps of liver should be carefully washed off before the fish is put under salt. Care should be taken to lay the fish open and smooth when salting; the quantity of salt can only be regulated by judgment and experience, as the size of the fish and strength of the salt must be taken into account. When it is practicable it will be of advantage to salt small fish and large in separate bulks, as the large should lie under salt a few days longer than the small. Salt your fish, whenever possible, **in bulk** but if "pens" or "vats" must be availed of, **they must not be tight**, as the pickle should run off freely from the fish. **THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT.**

There are some fishermen who make a practice of pickling their fish to make it weigh heavier, or to save salt—this is one of the greatest evils in connection with our fish trade. Fish that is pickled **can never be kept dry.**

It looks well just after spreading, but it always sweats in bulk, and after lying any length of time generally gives off a very offensive smell. Pickled fish should be discountenanced by both fishermen and merchant, as it certainly is the cause of a great deal of the complaints which come to us from the various markets of cargoes turning out badly, and often results in serious loss to the shipper. No fish merchant will pay merchantable price for what he knows to be pickled fish; but it is only the most experienced cullers who can always detect it when being shipped off. After a week or two in large bulks or cargoes, it will always be found to come out wet, and dampens at same time every fish that comes in contact with it.

**Avoid this most harmful practice of Pickling your Fish.**

**WASHING.** After lying in salt bulk a suitable time, wash the fish **perfectly clean** in sea-water—the vat or tub must be filled every time with clean water, and the fish laid smoothly, **face downward** in waterhorse for twelve or twenty hours, or longer, before spreading Fish which has lain in Salt all Winter **should be washed in fresh water** which will prevent that scurf or limelike specks generally seen upon fish made in early Spring. When fish is known to be too heavily salted it should be washed in fresh water and allowed to lie a little longer than usual in "waterhorse."

**SPREADING.** To make good fish well-boughed flak  
etc.

sary ; but after fish is "half made" upon a beach or longers. After the fish are made up into small "faggots," being smoothen out any fins or parts that may be turned in with the same care being observed as the faggots are made large to make up the faggots so that **the fish will lap and be well**. To cure fish properly it is necessary to let the back be in the sun as the face, especially if it has plenty, or too much salt. If fish is well stiffened it must be spread face up only to prevent sunburnt. When fish is sunburnt it is almost valueless ; as it gets worse, the back becomes black and sticky and then it breaks.

**Do everything you can to prevent fish getting sweaty.** When fish has reached the stage called "**saved**" let it be in faggots a day or two to work—after spreading again properly and let it remain a longer time to work before spreading and putting into store. The reason fish so often turns sweaty is because it is not sufficiently **worked** in bulk before being dried. It must not only be stiff in back and face, but dried thoroughly seasoned before being shipped, otherwise it will heave and not leave it too long, however, before putting it out for a day of sun. Should your fish, because of bad weather before time to stiffen, get slimy upon the flakes, **do not wash** pickle, but wash it with clean sea-water immediately before when the weather becomes fine.

If fish is carefully handled according to foregoing instructions will always have **good fish**, unless bad weather is met, and with proper care and handling there will be very little slimy fish.

Tomcods should not be cured for export in any quantity, as harm is done to our fishery, and to our markets as well, by curing anything under 10 inches in length. The use of small traps has, during the past year or two, put a lot of this little fish on the market. We are glad to notice that the law which prohibits netting with netting under four inch mesh is to be enforced.

To those fishing upon the Banks or elsewhere in deck the following practice is strongly urged :—

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Upon the landing of each trip the vessel's hold should be thoroughly scrubbed and washed out, using from 6 to 10 lbs. Washing Soda in the water—the pens or pound boards being cleansed in the same way. The cost will be trifling, and the delay very little; but the effect upon the condition of the voyage will be very marked. The greater part of the bad ill-smelling **Bank Fish**—so much of which is seen every Fall is traceable to the condition of the "hold" in which fish has been salted, as it becomes permeated with the odour of dirty bilge water and refuse, which has not been cleaned up.

This little pamphlet will fall into the hands of some who know as much, if not more, than those who publish it. It is sent out for the benefit of those who are careless, or are not expert fish handlers, in the hope that an improved cure may be brought about. **Better cure** will unquestionably produce better prices for our fish, better command of markets as against our competitors, and much more satisfaction to all concerned.

Instead of disputing and criticising the instructions given herein, you are respectfully requested to follow them out for a year or two and mark the result.

Yours truly,

BOWRING BROTHERS, LTD.,  
JOB BROTHERS & CO.,  
A. GOODRIDGE & SONS,  
HARVEY & CO.,  
BISHOP & MONROE,  
BAIRD, GORDON & CO.,  
BAINE JOHNSTON & CO.  
R. THORBURN.

St. John's, April 8th, 1903.



